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which in the words of Professor Vasmer will bear witness to the intensive research work to which Hoetzsch devoted himself in the years of his enforced leisure, completely abstaining from all political activities.

Pseudo-Symeon (pp. 705–7) and the Oleg Controversy

R. H. DOLLEY

IN a recent paper in *Speculum*, Professor R. J. H. Jenkins has drawn attention to a passage in the Chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon that obviously should have been taken into consideration by all concerned with the historicity of Oleg's expedition against Constantinople.¹ As the most recent offender in this respect, perhaps I may be allowed to append a few words on the subject of my master's discovery, the more so because there are indications that his views may have been misunderstood and even misrepresented by too zealous champions of the Russian Primary Chronicle. As I understand the position, he has neither impugned nor vindicated Pseudo-Nestor's veracity, but simply brought to the notice of the participants in the controversy a very relevant source that, without exception, they had overlooked.

At first sight, the passage in question does appear to supply the corroboration of the Russian Primary Chronicle that had hitherto been completely wanting. Momentarily my own beliefs were shaken—but only momentarily. It was not long before it began to dawn on me that here was a new and even more satisfactory argument against the historicity of Oleg's grand expedition. This theory I propounded in an interim paper read to Professor Grégoire's seminar at Brussels, and the stimulating discussion that followed seemed generally to bear out its essential validity. That was almost two years ago, but I have still to publish my conclusions, partly because of the pressure of my official duties, but mainly because I did not see how they could well be divorced from a full-scale study of all the different versions, transcripts and manuscripts of the *Vita Leonis VI Sapientis* originally composed by Symeon Logothetes. On this task I am still engaged, and seem likely to remain so for some considerable time to come.

The historicity of Oleg's expedition however concerns all mediaevalists and not only students of Kiev and Constantinople. It seems desirable therefore to sketch in lightly the principal line of argument which I hope later to be able to develop in a comprehensive survey of the wider problems. Accordingly I do not propose to enter on a discussion of the reasons that have led me, quite independently of the Oleg controversy, to modify the accepted *Quellenkritik* of the so-called *Scriptores post Theophanem*. Hitherto it has generally been accepted that the Continuator of Theophanes was one of the sources of Pseudo-Symeon.² By the Continuator of

→ R. J. H. Jenkins, 'The Supposed Russian Attack on Constantinople: Evidence of Pseudo-Symeon' (*Speculum*, XXIV, 1949, pp. 403–6).

² Cf. G. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica I, Die Byzantinischen Quellen der Geschichte der Türk-völker*, Budapest, 1942, p. 341.

Theophanes we are to understand at least four 10th-century writers, but the allocation of the different portions of the work is a task as complicated as it is controversial. It is safe to say, however, that the author of the *Vita Leonis VI Sapientis*—and of some subsequent portions of the work—is not the author of the first four books, or of course of the fifth.³ For this reason I would call him Continuator C of Theophanes, though whether he was third in point of time is yet another question lying outside the scope of this present note. My ‘rectification’ of the accepted *Quellenkritik* is to point out that, whatever may be true of the other books, the *Vita Leonis VI Sapientis* of Continuator C of Theophanes was not one of the sources employed by Pseudo-Symeon.

Continuator C of Theophanes and Pseudo-Symeon then must have derived their common aetiological material from a third source—the possibility that the former employed the latter’s work being belied by all the available evidence. This third source was certainly not the original text of Symeon Logothetes. Admittedly it is my contention that no MS. of the Logothete survives—at least of that portion with which we are at present concerned—but one cannot reasonably postulate a conspiracy of silence involving at least four major traditions.⁴ It is also obvious that the third source more closely approximated to the fuller and historically naked version of the excursus which appears in Pseudo-Symeon. Probably therefore it consisted of a list of names which appeared in an order that was neither alphabetical nor geographical, under each name appearing a precious etymology that cannot but recall the industrious pedantry of Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos and his propagandist school.

It is surely not without significance that both Continuator C of Theophanes and Pseudo-Symeon should have arrived quite independently at the same conclusion, namely that this list of names had in some way to be related to the repulse of Leon of Tripolis in 904. Indeed, it is very difficult to avoid the conclusion that in its original form the list of names possessed some superscription to that effect. This being so, we are under a certain obligation to relate all the names to the incident in question—unless, that is, such a relation should prove too wildly improbable. As I suggest at the end of this paper, this is far from being the case. With the exercise of only a modicum of ingenuity, it is perfectly possible to weave all the names into a perfectly plausible narrative of the operations leading up to Leon’s expulsion from the Dardanelles.

Conjecture apart, however, the historian is faced with the fact that both Continuator C of Theophanes and Pseudo-Symeon were frankly mystified by the list of names that both related to the repulse of the Arabs in 904. Continuator C, the more conscientious and certainly the more imaginative of the two, racked his brains to fit some of the earlier names to the parallel account of the event contained in the Logothete. When he came to names of places on the Black Sea which he knew the Arabs never reached, he threw in his hand and retired from the unequal contest. Certain of the

³ The whole problem is too wide for discussion here.

⁴ I.e. the group of MSS. known as the Continuator of Georgios Monachos, the MS. miscalled the Chronicle of Theodosios of Melitene, Vat. Greco 1807 (the Paraphraser of the Logothete) and Venet. Marc. 608 (the Continuator of the Logothete).

etymologies however he carefully noted down and stored up for insertion in less mysterious contexts.⁵ Pseudo-Symeon, for whom preciousness was ever an end in itself, had no such scruples. Without a single word of explanation, he copied out the whole excursus as it stood.

Included in the excursus was a perfectly good and unequivocal reference to the Russians. In passing I may add that I am completely convinced by Professor Jenkins's suggestion that we should see in the cryptic mention of vaticinations an allusion to the divinatory powers of Oleg Veshchy.⁶ Neither to Continuator C of Theophanes nor to Pseudo-Symeon did this intriguing citation of the Russians convey anything—at least as far as a Leonine context was concerned. Pseudo-Symeon copied out the reference without comment and without betraying a glimmer of understanding; Continuator C, completely baffled, quietly suppressed the rest of his source and later used the Russian etymologies to adorn his version of the repulse of Igor'.⁷ Yet both these writers were hard at work at a period when it was fashionable to sling mud at the legitimate Macedonian line, and both may well have been alive at the time when Oleg is supposed to have carried fire and sword to the gates of Constantinople.⁸ Elsewhere I have shown—or tried to show—how far-fetched is the theory that would postulate a conspiracy of silence on the part of historians whom we know to have been hostile to Leon and his heirs, but in this note I wish to stress their utter bewilderment when confronted with a document suggesting Russian intervention in the context of the latter years of Leon's reign. It is not that they are trying to hide something—Pseudo-Symeon copies out the wretched excursus *in extenso*—but that they can make nothing of it. Memories are proverbially short, but sackings of the suburbs of Constantinople were not an everyday occurrence. Even if the Logothete did choose to pass over the interlude, it is inconceivable that there should have been no tradition, oral or otherwise, to which Continuator C of Theophanes could have recourse when sorely puzzled.⁹ And puzzled the Continuator certainly was!

Thus, I regard my master's discovery as capable of providing a substantial advance on the old *argumentum a silentio* by which Lähr and Grégoire originally refuted the extravagances of Pseudo-Nestor.¹⁰ That I myself believed that argument convincing should be clear from the tenor of my own humble contribution to the controversy, but it would be unscientific to assert—or even to imply—that the *argumentum a silentio* was the best possible form of objection. Now, however, thanks to this passage

⁵ Nikopolis, for example, in his account of the reign of Romanos Lakapenos, etc. Bonn, p. 420.

⁶ If the informants of the author of the excursus were refugees from Oleg's conquest of Kiev—which they quite likely were—it is more than probable that they would have attributed his success to sorcery. Bonn, p. 423.

⁷ They probably composed their histories during the regencies of Nikephoros Phokas and Ioannes Zimiskes.

⁸ Even under Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos the opposition families had their own scholars, e.g. the anonymous author of the *Παρά Βασιλείου Πατρικίου καὶ Παρακοιμωμένου*.

¹⁰ For a summary of the more important literature, see my paper 'Oleg's Mythical Campaign against Constantinople,' *Bulletin de l'Académie royale de Belgique (Classe des Lettres)*, XXXV, 1949, pp. 106–30. To the literature therein cited should be added S. P. Obnorsky's study of the language of the treaties in *Tazyki Myshleniye*, VI–VIII, 1931, p. 102.

in Pseudo-Symeon, the champions of Pseudo-Nestor will have to explain away not the silence of the Greek sources, but their bewilderment—a very different matter. Would it be presumptuous to suggest that the whole question has been reopened once again, or provocative to express the hope that the devotees of the Russian Primary Chronicle will break their twelve years' silence?

In conclusion, it is fascinating to speculate on the authorship of the mysterious excursus that so baffled Continuator C of Theophanes. As I have suggested above, it smacks of the historiographical school of the Great Palace that Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos employed about the glorification of the Macedonian line. As Professor Jenkins has pointed out, it almost certainly underlies some story. The theory I would put forward is that the excursus in its original form was drawn up under the imperial pedant's personal supervision when he was collecting material for his projected life of Leon VI.¹¹ It would not be the only example of a document of this description surviving the dispersal of the palace school of propaganda—recently I have shown that certain pages of Venet. Marc. 335, originally published by Lambros as by an anonymous writer, in fact belong to a long-lost compilation, the βιβλίον τὸ περιέχον περὶ εὐδείας καὶ χειμῶνος κτλ, for which Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos himself claimed the credit.¹² The repulse of the Arabs from the approaches of the capital in 904 was one of the great achievements of Leon's reign—viewed, that is, from the standpoint of the mass of the citizens of Constantinople.¹³ It would have been the climax of the son's pious biography and as such adorned with the most precious rhetoric. My suggestion is that Konstantinos jotted down—or dictated—the proper names relevant to the story, and jotted them down *in the order in which they were to occur*. Under each name was left a space for the palace etymologists to fill in the appropriate aetiological matter that would enable their master to parade his learning.

Any reconstruction of the underlying story must of necessity be hypothetical. Professor Jenkins has advanced one that postulates two stories, one moreover that champions of Pseudo-Nestor will not be slow to claim as a vindication of their hero's infallibility. For my part I wish no more than to suggest an alternative reconstruction which demands only one underlying story and which may claim a correspondingly greater degree of probability. In the footnotes are briefly indicated some of the sources that may seem to provide a measure of corroboration. It must be stressed, however, that the whole reconstruction is extremely tentative. Finality is impossible, but it may well be that other and more competent exponents of the 'Brussels school' will suggest alternative reconstructions of individual incidents which cumulatively will prove even more destructive of Pseudo-Nestor's reputation for veracity.¹⁴

'Leon of *Tripolis*', the reconstruction runs, 'entered the *Aegean* and

¹¹ This life seems never to have materialised.

→ R. H. Dolley, 'Meteorology in the Byzantine Navy', *The Mariner's Mirror*, XXXVII, 1951, pp. 5–16.

¹³ It is possible that the 'Virgo Orans' coinage of Leon VI may commemorate this repulse, but again the question merits a fuller study.

¹⁴ Cf. Professor Grégoire's brilliant suggestion about the Russians *infra*, n. 21.

came to *Strobelos*.¹⁵ Thence he came to *Lampsakos*, turning aside to ravage *Imbros*, and even entered the *Hellespont*.¹⁶ One part of his fleet was told off to keep watch for the approach of the *Kibyrrhaiotic* squadron, and at the same time ravaged the islands of *Thasos* and *Samothrake*.¹⁷ The *Latakieh* squadron sacked *Tenedos*. Hearing of Leon's approach, the emperor of blessed memory took counsel, and bethought himself of the garrison and fleet that he had stationed at *Mesembria*, the Mesembria, that is, at the foot of Mount *Haimos*.¹⁸ The soldiers were straightway embarked on the ships and came by sea as far as *Medeia* (Salmydessos).¹⁹ Here they went ashore and marched across to *Selybria*, where they could protect the road running westwards into *Makedonia* and *Nikopolis*.²⁰ The ships, on the other hand, their decks cleared for action, sailed to *Hieron* and *Pharos*, where they were joined by the squadron stationed in those waters against the *Russians*, the so-called *Dromites*.²¹ The whole force then passed through the straits and joined Hemerios who was cruising off Mount *Trikephalos*.²² Seeing his adversary so unexpectedly reinforced, the Arab admiral tarried no longer and retreated. The commander of the reinforcements was Ioannes *Rhadenos* (or perhaps: It was this same Leon of Tripolis who was later defeated with tremendous loss by Ioannes *Rhadenos*?).²³

¹⁵ Cf. Theoph. Cont., p. 388.

¹⁶ The Logothete tradition gives the limit of their penetration as Parion.

¹⁷ Ioannes Kameniates informs us that the Arabs constructed their siege-engines at Thasos, which they seem to have seized as a base. General activity in the whole of the northern Aegean seems implied by the emperor's fears for Thessalonike long before Leon turned back from the Hellespont.

¹⁸ Μεσεμβρία ἐπὶ Αἰῶ, the full name for Mesembria.

¹⁹ Mesembria had been virtually cut off by land since Bulgarian seizure of the territory at the head of the Gulf of Burgas (cf. the map in Runciman, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire*). A sea evacuation moreover could be accomplished without advertising to Symeon the fact that the city was left practically defenceless.

²⁰ This would fit in with the emperor's conviction from the first that Thessalonike was in danger and not his own capital.

²¹ The existence of the squadron at Stenon is known from Konst. Porph. (*DAI*, ed. Moravcsik and Jenkins, p. 247.) Professor Grégoire has suggested that the reference may well be to the fleet from Mesembria embarking the Russians of the imperial guard on their way to join Hemerios. The existence of a Russian element in the imperial guard at such an early date has already been postulated by Vasil'yev and by Bury (cf. Dolley, 'Oleg's Mythical Campaign against Constantinople', p. 116).

²² Mount Trikephalos has still to be identified, but I would advance the claims of the trifurcated mountain formation at the extremity of the promontory to the north-west of the classical Kios.

²³ Cf. Cont. Geo. Mon., Bonn, p. 897. I was correcting the proofs of the above the very day I was able to see for the first time a copy of Professor A. A. Vasil'yev's new monograph, *The Second Russian Attack on Constantinople* (Dumbarton Oaks Papers, No. 6, pp. 165-224). This long, closely argued and extremely well documented study must supersede Ostrogorsky's as the standard presentation of the 'Nestorian' case, but I must confess to remaining completely unconvinced though deeply sensible of the kindness with which Vasil'yev has discussed my earlier paper. The vital question of the utter bewilderment of Pseudo-Symeon and Continuator C of Theophanes has still to be faced by Nestor's apologists, and I feel very strongly that the fuller treatment accorded Marvazi's allusion to the Russians at most corroborates my own contention that in the early 10th century there were Russian raids on Byzantine territory. It was raids of this type that ceased with the settlement of 907, and I feel it is perhaps more significant than might at first appear that the treaty was ratified by all the Russian princes and not by their overlord only. The allusion to 'Scythian barbarity' in Choroisphaktes is surely too vague, and, as Vasil'yev himself admits, has hitherto been taken quite naturally as a reference to the Bulgars. I wonder too whether Vasil'yev's opinions and mine are quite so diametrically opposed as a rapid reading of his monograph might suggest.